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"DO WE EXPECT TOO MUCH OF OUR YOUTH?"

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Moderator:

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Auspices
Father Flanagan's Boys' Home
Boys Town, Nebraska

BULLETIN OF AMERICA'S TOWN MEETING OF THE AIR

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"DO WE EXPECT TOO MUCH OF OUR YOUTH?"

ANNOUNCER: TOWN MEETING tonight originates at Boys Town, Nebraska, the world-famed "City of Little Men" for homeless, neglected and underprivileged boys regardless of their race or creed. It is especially significant that our discussion on this important problem of youth should take place here, for Father Flanagan's Boys' Home is recognized as an outstanding leader in the care and education of homeless boys. Founded in December, 1917, by the late Monsignor Edward J. Flanagan, who died in 1948, Boys Town today is under the capable direction of Monsignor Nicholas H. Wegner. Since its founding, Boys Town has trained for good citizenship more than 8,000 boys and the philosophy and methods of boy training developed at Boys Town have spread to practically every nation on the globe. Town Hall congratulates the staff of Boys Town upon their great contribution to the welfare of so many and we extend our good wishes for continued achievement in the years ahead.

Now to preside as moderator of our discussion, here is Shepherd L. Witman, Director of Residential Seminars on World Affairs. Dr. Witman!

DR. WITMAN: We know this is not a new topic. We have always been interested in our youth. But in recent years, we have put much more energy into worrying about them and trying to help them. Doubtless some of this comes from our own guilty consciences and some from our realization that their problems are often the product of the society we have created for them.

But I wonder if beneath all of this is not the deeper realization that in the past few years, and I mean the very few recent years, there has been such a vast change in our social and political world that we adults just are not equipped to cope with those changes. How many of us were taught anything about atomic energy -- or about a world in which the United States is the most powerful nation -- or one in which man travels from New York to Paris between supper and breakfast? Don't we really need a whole new generation to meet these enormous and original conditions? Can men who have been reared to judge and act by the standards of a pre-atomic era do more than maintain a holding action until a younger generation conditioned and educated to these new realities can take over? And if this is so, is this expecting too much of our youth?

What do you people out in the listening audience think about that? To help you do that thinking, we have with us two gentlemen who will guide this discussion this evening. We will hear first from Mr. Saul D. Alinsky. Since 1939, he has been Executive Director of the Industrial Areas Foundation. Following graduation from college, he spent five years with Chicago's Institute for Juvenile Research and three years with the State Penitentiary System at Joliet. He was co-founder of the Back of the Yards Council in Chicago. In 1950, the Catholic Youth organization of America presented to Mr. Alinsky their annual award for social justice. In addition to his books, "Reveille for Radicals" and "John L. Lewis, A Biography," Mr. Alinsky has contributed numerous articles to sociology, criminology and psychology publications. Mr. Alinsky!

MR. ALINSKY: I cannot begin without telling you how glad I am to be here at Boys Town and, particularly, to have the opportunity of meeting with my old friend, Monsignor Wegner, whom I regard as one of the greatest living Americans.

Now to the subject. The youth of today may well be described by future historians as the hot and cold generation. Its birth and early years were during hot World War II. Its adolescence during the cold war. They have never known a temperate world of peace. Fear and insecurity have been the theme of their times.

A times fed by fear, suspicion and hatred between nations which soon spread between man and his fellowman, spawning a drive to conformity. To a significant extent

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the slogan of the past decade was to be found in two words -- "Don't Think." To think or to dissent was dangerous.

A times when the titanic technical advances of industry the individual has increasingly lost his identity and dignity. Where a man is no longer even a number on a payroll but just some holes, empty spaces if you please, on a punch card.

A times which brought this generation which no other in American history has known during a period of technical peace -- compulsory military service.

Throughout theirs has been a time of insecurity admitting little room for thought of the future -- a thought necessary if life is to have a purpose and form. Instead, a large part of their lives has been on the immediate, and episodic living in installations just as they see the major part of the economy about them.

And yet with these negatives, there are strong positives. The shrinking of distance and of the world has compelled this generation to understand that they are their brother's keeper; that their own welfare is contingent on the welfare of others, not just across the street but across the ocean.

With this has come a shrinking of fears and prejudices because of differences of color and creed.

This is the generation which accepts naturally the revolutionary change of the atomic age. Changes which have stirred their curiosity for understanding and which have helped in the seeming beginning of a thaw in the deep freeze of conformity.

A times where a youngster, barely out of his teens, calmly and competently takes over the controls of an incredibly complicated two million dollar aircraft and its precious beyond price human cargo.

If we were not utter optimists in our expectations for the succeeding generation, mankind would long ago have ceased the struggle to make this a better world. Our youth, the next generation, will be the first to begin a world of "Peace on earth, good will to men." It will, because it will have no alternative.

~~absentia~~ DR. WITMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Alinsky, for that fine statement. And now let's hear from another distinguished authority on this subject, Mr. Russell W. Ballard, who has been director of Chicago's famed Hull-House for twelve years. In previous years, he served as principal of an elementary school whose 1200 pupils represented 27 different nationalities. He left this position to direct a county Department of Public Welfare at Gary, where he assumed responsibility for the child welfare programs, eventually developing this division to include a full time, completely staffed psychiatric clinic. In 1941, Mr. Ballard became superintendent of the Illinois State Training School for boys. Mr. Russell W. Ballard, welcome to TOWN MEETING!

MR. BALLARD: We are not expecting too much of our youth when we expect them to grow into well balanced, emotionally mature adults capable of becoming contributing members of society when and if we consider that great majority who are being reared in good homes with understanding parents who are meeting the basic needs of their children for love and security.

When children live in homes where parental devotion is coupled with a responsibility for proper discipline, for teaching children regard for the rights of others, and for leading them into a normal religious experience; homes that are free from the poison of religious and racial prejudice and reflect the true spirit of democracy where children are permitted to experience cooperation with their elders and progressively share in making decisions that affect them; homes where parents themselves set a pattern of respect for social and legal codes, I repeat, -- we are not expecting too much of such children.

But, on the other hand, we are expecting too much of growing children when we expect them to adjust satisfactorily to a hostile environment, where they first experience rejection in the cradle and later meet frustration on crowded streets and find only unhappiness and failure at school. Or, can we expect a child to grow up without

worries and difficulties in an environment where the color of his skin or the difference of his culture makes life precarious for him and where his life is clouded by the fears of his parents who, in some areas, live in dread of violence? Youth who fail have seldom or never sensed the emotional satisfaction that results when a close relationship is established with an understanding and sympathetic adult -- a parent, a teacher, a religious leader, a recreation leader. Warmth and acceptance and affection are the ingredients, the stuff if you please, out of which such a relationship is made.

No child is predestined to behave in socially unacceptable ways, -- way of extreme non-conformity and law violation -- and thus become an offender. While 97 out of every 100 children and youth have no court record and are, therefore, not officially classified as offenders, there is evidence that juvenile offenses are increasing. This ugly fact is inescapable as we pose the question, "Are We Expecting Too Much of Our Youth?"

The behavior of youth reflects the best and the worst in our society. We can check the upswing in juvenile offenses when, and only when we as adults obey the law ourselves; and, secondly, when we make up our collective minds to shore up our great democratic structure by demanding of our public officials that laws be enforced. Yes, demand the enforcement of laws against those who contemptuously disregard them and whose successful evasion and immunity breed discouragement, apathy and indifference among thoughtful citizens.

We can check juvenile offenses when we are willing to pay what it costs in both time and money to prevent serious maladjustment in youth and provide adequate treatment for the offender. It takes time to function as an alert, practicing citizen of a community working with one's neighbors at the local level to correct the ills and right the wrongs of the neighborhood. And it takes money -- lots of money -- to provide the expensive but necessary services for children in trouble.

The ability to become a parent is no assurance that one can measure up to the responsibilities of parenthood. Can we as parents expect more of ourselves? Are we willing through association with other parents to take the time to learn more about the basic needs, the struggles, the perplexities of our children? And, as members at large of a free society, are we willing to pay the cost in money of those protective services, -- schools, institutions of religion and public and private social services that are necessary to help the family shield their children from the social hazards that now confront them?

DR. WITMAN: Thank you, Mr. Ballard. Now you have heard these very precise statements from both of these gentlemen and this begins our discussion of the question in hand. First let's hear from Mr. Alinsky. Mr. Alinsky, you have never been known to avoid a controversy or side-step an issue. As a matter of fact, if I recall your reputation correctly, you are prepared to step in vigorously so I'm going to give you the first chance. What do you have to say about Mr. Ballard's statement?

MR. ALINSKY: Well, I would like to ask three questions. Do I ask three at once or one at a time?

DR. WITMAN: You can ask three at the same time but we're not going to expect Mr. Ballard to answer them all at once, he can take them one by one.

MR. ALINSKY: A la Podres in the World Series, do you want a slow ball first? Well, the first question is on your remark, "are we expecting too much of growing children when we expect them to adjust satisfactorily to a hostile environment, etc." Through it I get something that I am basically in agreement with, the necessity for love for children, etc., but this is what everybody talks about. I am wondering whether this issue hasn't been overdone and looking at the other side of it, there is a certain grit, a certain development of a -- call it character -- of certain personality

characteristics which come out of not being shielded -- out of being forced to face up to issues at a pretty tender age. Isn't there such a thing as overdoing this love in developing a relative dependency, rather than the toughness that is necessary because it is a tough world?

MR. BALLARD: I'm not speaking about children who may be spoiled, who are over-protected, who are over-sheltered; I think that the security which comes from the love exhibited by parents is pretty basic to our social adjustment. Life is not easy, it is not easy for any of us to grow up and make a relatively good adaptation to our world, but I think it is very basic, at least that is my feeling, that a child have the sense of being wanted, of belonging, having the security that comes out of a home where affection is exhibited.

DR. WITMAN: Since we're talking in baseball parlance tonight, Mr. Ballard, you can pitch a fast one back to Mr. Alinsky on his statement.

MR. BALLARD: I'm not controversial this evening. I'm not mad at anybody. I was just very much impressed with Mr. Alinsky's opening statement and in reflection I went back to the end of the first World War when Woodrow Wilson said "We have come to the end of an era," and the world would not be the same again. I didn't know what he meant but in the succeeding years of depression and war and the world in which we live, I can understand what he meant. And I can understand the difficulty of youth today in trying to adapt themselves to a most exciting world. Youth are restless -- it is an exciting world -- and I think the world to which they are trying to adjust was a much different world than the calm, pre-World War years in which I reached my majority.

DR. WITMAN: The big question is how can they adjust? You said you were not in a quarrelsome mood, nor am I, but I am in an inquiring mood, and I would like to know from either one of you gentlemen how you feel this process can be assisted. For example, specifically, you say that there are requirements in terms of the home, but are there not requirements in terms of society. Shouldn't we get some public assistance in this matter? How about federal aid? How about government aid versus private aid?

MR. ALINSKY: I would like to adjust myself to a word which you use, and which ties up with the last remark and then -- I'm not ducking your question -- and then I would like to comment on Mr. Ballard's remarks on the question on should we have federal aid or how do we get this money. The use of the term "adjustment," the term of "security," -- you always come back to adjustment. I don't intend to play devil's advocate here, but I would like to point out to you that I have serious question about all this business of adjustment. This world has not been created in the sense of the great contributions by so-called adjusted people. It has been created by people who did not want to adjust to certain circumstances and, as a result, call them maladjusted, they went out and made their contributions. The best example of adjusted citizens that you can find is in a totalitarian state where everybody is adjusted and a robot in the thing. My plea is for more people who are not so adjusted, who are willing to stand up and be counted and who are, from the point of view of others, non-conformists or maladjusted. I don't want to pursue this unless you do because I don't want to get away from that question of yours, but I could not refrain from getting that out.

MR. BALLARD: Well, of course, it's your interpretation of the word "adjustment." I am thinking about the emotionally immaturity -- the emotionally disturbed maladjusted which is explicable by the fact that the child does not have sufficient love in his life, if he doesn't belong, if he isn't wanted, he doesn't adjust well emotionally to his complex world. Now, to pick up where you left off, I think you're baiting me a little bit, but I'm glad to come in here. In all of my mature years, I have had the responsibility of working with youth and, therefore, trying to draw around the personnel

who understood children and their problems. The great need in this whole field of the maladjusted, if you please, the child who is in trouble, is to find understanding and well-trained personnel. And I am convinced that if we improve the social situation, if we are able to help more of our troubled youth, we're going to have to have some money at the federal level. The federal Government has greater taxing power, they have set the pattern with the Smith-Hughes Act. The Sheppard-Towner Act is a great background of aid to help children. But why is it that the child in trouble, the child that has difficulty in adaptation -- more money is not forthcoming for his support? And so I want grants in aid following the Child Welfare Program of the Children's Bureau, to help the State, to help the backward area, to help the local counties train personnel.

MR. ALINSKY: Where do you want the money from?

MR. BALLARD: I want the money from the Federal Government in advancing aid to the States, I want money to join with the local and State forces in developing training courses; in service training; for providing more institutional personnel; training police officers; detention home personnel, where there is also a great need; and unless we attack this and make an all-out attack on it, I am afraid we are not going to do much more than talk about the problem.

MR. ALINSKY: This is a hard thing for me to say, in spite of the fact that I am sure that my remark at this point will be used against me for a long time -- my politics are generally that of a New Dealer - and the New Deal came in pretty heavily on federal aid, but as I've gotten older and as I've observed that there is such a think that for everything you get, you've got to pay back for; or the simple idea that for every positive there is usually a negative, I am extremely apprehensive of more federal intervention and the cost and the penalty that goes with it because anybody who is giving you money, gives it to you with a say-so on how you are going to spend it. Even if it is as simple as the fact that you are working on a payroll for somebody, you're not going to cross up that person if you want to stay on that job and keep getting your paycheck. Now, I'm concerned in terms of the whole democratic process on what happens as government moves in more and more in many areas. There are certain areas that I believe only government can operate in, such as TVA, for example, but when you come into straight cash disbursements wherein the government begins to dominate -- indirectly, if you please -- policies of operation, I begin to pause. I would also like to suggest from what you said that this would also include research. Am I right? Research in the cause of the crime?

MR. BALLARD: I think there is probably some need for study of the methods of prevention and treatment.

MR. ALINSKY: Now, is there really? There isn't a textbook in the field of criminology, regardless of the discipline it emphasizes, that doesn't begin and end by pointing out that crime in the main comes out of certain basic ills -- slums, economic insecurity, racial discrimination, disease -- and a host of basic ills. Now we know that, but to get involved in doing something about it, in other words, approaching it on the basis of social surgery rather than our present approaches of cosmetic coverups, is something that enters into the field of controversy. For example, I made the statement in Washington before a Senate Committee on this thing. Suppose you do use this \$5 million for research. You're going to find out what we know and after you find out, what are you going to do about it?

DR. WITMAN: One of the things that we have to do something about here tonight is we have to remember what our subject is, and that is "Are We Expecting Too Much of Our Youth?" I think at the moment we are trying to solve the problems for our youth here and we have suggested several things. We have said that there is a great personal problem which youth has and that one of the ways in which you try to correct this great

personal problem is by providing an adequate home situation or adequate personal situation, the providing of love, although Mr. Alinsky said he thinks that maybe the too much love extension might create a dependency on the part of the individual. He says also that maybe adjustment that we are asking for is really seeking a conformity which would create a uniformity which he is a little afraid of. We also discussed the question of public aid. Mr. Ballard felt that public aid for the correction of these problems was a necessity and Mr. Alinsky thought that it was not. There was disagreement between our two gentlemen also on the matter of research -- whether it was needed as much as some people think it is needed. So we have talked about several elements of this problem of whether or not we are expecting too much of our youth. But we still haven't answered the question whether we are expecting too much. Is it youth that we are asking these things from? Mr. Ballard, will you talk to that?

MR. BALLARD: No, I want to answer Mr. Alinsky in his objection to my wanting some federal aid at the local level. I've had the experience of administering a county welfare program. I saw a relief program administered at the local level without any federal funds -- how inefficiently it was administered and our whole administration was leveled up because of the funds that came from the upper levels of government. It raised the standard of administration. We got a merit system out of it, if you please, and we were able to create wider services because we had more money. And I am sure that Mr. Alinsky may object to federal aid for some services but he couldn't object to federal aid if it meant better probation, better detention service, better trained personnel.

MR. ALINSKY: I don't object to federal aid. All that I am saying is that I am trying to raise a note of caution. We just can't glibly regard it as money which is coming in and that is badly needed. I am saying that every time in those areas in which you have private agencies doing a job, every time you get public money involved you've got to examine it on top and on bottom and sideways, to make sure that the negatives, the penalties will not more than counterbalance the positives.

DR. WITMAN: On that note of caution, I am going to interrupt here and see what you two gentlemen can do with this week's winner of the American Peoples Encyclopedia, who is Miss Lillian W. Voorhees of Nashville, Tennessee. She submitted this question, and I'll read it to you and you tell us what you think. The question is: "Are we not misled by the sophistication of our modern youth into expecting of them corresponding wisdom and moral courage, without sufficient experience and sufficient guidance in developing these very qualities?"

MR. BALLARD: I don't agree that the great majority of youth do not have sufficient experience and sufficient guidance in developing qualities of wisdom and moral courage. I don't know what the questioner means by the sophistication of our modern youth. I am afraid that I am not equipped to make a very intelligent response to that question. I just don't agree with the assumption that youth does not have sufficient experience and sufficient guidance in developing qualities of wisdom and moral courage. I think that, by and large, we do a pretty good job in our schools and in our homes in indoctrinating them.

MR. ALINSKY: One of the lessons I learned early in life was when you can't approach something in toto you take it in pieces or parts. As I look at this question, first of all, wisdom and moral courage are extremely rare and not just among modern youth but among modern adults and adults that were pre-modern and adults that will follow us. By sophistication, I assume, is meant just being glib at things and being able to toss off names or, you know, one of those remarks just like "Plato said," although the party never read Plato or anything else. If we can be misled by sophistication of modern youth, my answer is that it is a question of whether we can be misled by sophistication of anybody and in some cases Yes, in other cases No -- depending

on the wisdom of the person who is being led or misled.

DR. WITMAN: Thank you. I know that our listening audience has a great many questions in their mind and I am hopeful that by taking questions from our audience here tonight, your questions out there in the unseen audience will be raised and, I hope, answered by the gentlemen to your satisfaction.

You have already heard a very fine tribute, in which we all concur, for our host here at Boys Town, who is Monsignor Nicholas H. Wegner, who has been director of this fine institution since 1948. And I think that it would be most appropriate if we would ask Father Wegner if he has the first question or comment to make from the audience.

FATHER WEGNER: Thank you. I think we have all enjoyed the discussion between Mr. Alinsky and Mr. Ballard and we have learned a great deal from it. There is no doubt that the most pressing question of our times is that of youth, how they will carry on after we are gone and, how we are preparing our youth for today. I've often been asked the question and I've tried to answer it -- why should we not expect more of our youth because of the wonderful educational facilities they have, the fine teachers and everything that goes with it. They have good homes, for the most part -- good environment and yet are our youth producing as they should, having reaped the benefits of a fine education, mental, moral, physical and religious. I think the answer was given, to some extent, in the discussion this evening, but I should like to pose that question to these two gentlemen. Are we reaping rewards of all the fine education facilities for the youth that this country has to offer them?

DR. WITMAN: Very good, thank you. That's right down the line of our topic of this evening's discussion. Mr. Alinsky, will you take that first?

MR. ALINSKY: That is one question that I think I can adjust myself to, positively and directly. I would say emphatically Yes, we are reaping it in the negative sense and much to our astonishment, we are getting a lot of positives in spite of that. And this is what I mean. It has been said by a leading educator that we are living in such an age of materialism and that our educational institutions so reflect that age, that the major reason why people go to college today is to learn how to make as much money as possible, in as short a time as possible and stay out of jail while you are doing it. You go to college to make the right connections to have that college diploma and degree which is necessary for social advancement and to meet attractive girls, whose fathers happen to be very prominent employers, which also helps in your career. So in this kind of a materialistic -- almost robot-like educational institutional structure which we have here where you take so many courses and you give so many answers and then you get a piece of paper that says you're educated when, in fact, you are not, -- yes, to a significant extent a lot of the negatives that we have been reaping are those which we have plowed under. I would end by saying that our educational institutions, to a significant extent, represent mausoleums of plowed under intelligence.

MR. BALLARD: I think I can sense in many of the youth with whom I come in contact a spiritual awakening. I don't think it is all materialism. I think a little of what Mr. Alinsky says is true, but in thinking in terms of individuals, turning aside from their materialism and, for instance, going into religious work, not isolated examples -- I think that there is a deep spiritual sense and I don't take quite as pessimistic a view of the situation as I believe Mr. Alinsky imparts in this remark.

MR. ALINSKY: I'd like to go on record that I am not a pessimist.

DR. WITMAN: All right, you are not a pessimist, Mr. Alinsky, it's on the record. Let's take questions from our audience now. May we have yours, Sir?

QUESTIONER: Mr. Alinsky, are the schools of America graduating enough superior students to meet the increasing demands of industry and government for high calibre leaders?

MR. ALINSKY: I don't know. The industry claims that they're not, but when you check into it, it's particular kinds of industry which are demanding certain kinds of technically trained people. They claim we have a great shortage on them. On the other hand, I'm not so sure that technical education per se alone as actual education.

QUESTIONER: I don't think we are graduating enough social engineers. That's the thing that I am pleading for.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Ballard, as the United States makes its advancements in the scientific field, etc., is it actually a question of expecting too much or expecting even more of the boys or young girls of the U.S. today?

MR. BALLARD: In the light of all the investment we are making in youth, in terms of education and religion, I think that we can expect a great deal of them.

DR. WITMAN: Would you say we can expect more than we have been expecting?

MR. BALLARD: I don't know.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Alinsky, can we expect our youth to be morally responsive when moral training is neglected in many of our homes and schools?

MR. ALINSKY: You're almost putting me on a pedestal of Socrates with that kind of a question. From those homes that have the kind of moral instruction, I suppose not. From those that have not come from that kind of a home, it need not necessarily be a home, -- you don't pick up all of your morality just from the inside of a house with a mother and father. You pick it up from your associates, you pick it up from your contacts around. If you have, and I'm not trying to beg your question, believe me, if you have a non-moral situation I should think that it would be expecting too much, yes.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Ballard, do you think that teenagers should have a certain time to be off the streets and roads?

MR. BALLARD: I'm not so sure that the curfew law is the answer to the problem of youths' difficulties. I don't think it is a matter of the hour of the night, it's a matter of what you do and where you are.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Alinsky, can you suggest ways in which parents can be taught to appreciate their citizenship rights and duties so that they can exemplify responsibility to youth?

MR. ALINSKY: Yes, I think I can suggest a way. There is only one way that you can get parents, or anybody else, to appreciate their responsibility. You create the circumstances whereby they assume responsibility, and by assuming them, they learn both the drama of living in a participating world and also begin to learn that there is a give and take in interpersonal relations. The most promising approach to that extent, from my point of view, is the proper kind of community organization because parents live in communities and to get them, through the medium of community organization, to participate and learn how to accept responsibility-- then, in turn, that will reflect upon them as individuals and as parents.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Ballard, would you say that juvenile delinquency's roots lie in parents' failure to instill in their offspring a sense of mission -- a sense of responsibility -- and a sense of God?

MR. BALLARD: I think that is one answer, one very positive answer, that's true. I think that we must not overlook the source of religion in this whole adjustment process and I think when a parent has failed to instill the proper ideals and proper religious attitude in the hearts of children, certainly there is one missing normal element in his life.

QUESTIONER: Precluding religion though, I also mentioned mission and responsibility. It seems we have an age where little is expected of our teen age groups. For instance, responsibility in the home. The old idea of chores, manual labor. It seems that no longer is labor considered part of our dignity, but rather beneath the dignity and we see the days when the very old parents used to work and do chores no longer exist. We have it now where the parents coddle their children and, therefore, I ask you to explain again, how about the sense of responsibility?

MR. BALLARD: I could agree with you on that. I think you can generalize and say that they all coddle their children and there aren't enough chores to do in some of our crowded cities. We look for jobs for the child to do around the house. I certainly agree with you. We must inculcate a sense of responsibility.

MR. ALINSKY: I think it is a little more than simply putting an indictment on the parents, for coddling. After all, the parents live in the world too, exactly as the teen agers do and as long as they are living in the world where all of the things that you state hold true, a world of the angle, the connection, knowing the right God, being smart about things and getting ahead, and where it is your bank account and not your moral account which is important, -- obviously they too are products of these kinds of circumstances.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Alinsky, do you think more places or institutes with a self-government, such as Boys Town, would realize the importance of their community if given such a chance?

MR. ALINSKY: Yes, but -- and the but is just this -- that unfortunately so many ideas are the results and they are conceived and carried through along the lines that you have in mind that are very good because of the presence of a personality that is completely sympathetic on it. Now you just don't have so many Monsignor Wegners around the country and, lacking that, it becomes more academic than practical as to whether or not we can get this kind of an institution elsewhere.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Alinsky, why should there be a curfew on teen age drivers?

MR. ALINSKY: You ask that of me as though I approve of them. My attitude on that changes from day to day. I'll be driving down the street and a couple of teen agers in a hot rod will go tearing in front of me and I'd say to myself, they shouldn't let them drive until they are 25 years old, you know? On the other hand, I'll sit around quietly in the safety of my living room and take another attitude. But I would like to leave you with this thought, that people who have not grown up in certain responsibilities in terms of consideration for others, and a lot of adults never do, put behind the wheel of an instrument which can go at an almost unlimited speed, when you think in terms of 70 and 80 miles an hour, and kill a lot of people -- this is something that requires a lot of caution.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Ballard, are we expecting too much of our youth when we require military service at the age of 18? Does this put our youth in a poor environment at too early an age?

MR. BALLARD: I think it depends upon the individual. I know of young fellows that have matured and grown up and benefited by the routine, the more or less controlled environment in which they are placed in military service. I personally have not approved of universal military service but in the kind of world in which we live, it seems that we must have our defenses up. When I think of defense and total defense, I want to do all we can to close up the gaps in our social defenses at home for the youth that are growing up.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Alinsky, what are some basic personality and character qualities you feel are necessary for our youth to face everyday problems?

MR. ALINSKY: You are raising what I call one of the big questions in life. Your question could apply just as well to adults as to youth. I suppose what we are trying to learn -- well, first of all, let's learn. This is an important basic fact. Secondly, we are trying to understand our relationship to the world around us; we're trying to understand what real values in life are -- what the meaning of life is -- what our meaning is as a person. Now, this is a tremendous question. I do not expect youth to be able to adjust themselves to it, because you need a long body of experience which only comes out of living a long time actually out of those experiences. I suppose as far as youth are concerned, one thing I would suggest is please, give the adults, whether they be parents or friends or advisors or counsellors, the fact that somebody is past the age of 25 does not necessarily mean that they ought to be dead by this time and that they have learned something that is worth listening to with some sympathy. It's taking a second, but I have to tell this one story. I saw "Peter Pan" with a famous movie star. My little boy, who is six years old, was sitting along side of me. At one time he asked me how old the gal was who was playing Peter Pan and I said 45. And with that, in a loud voice that could be heard all over in the Civic Opera Building, he turned to me and said, "My God, and she's still alive?" That is the attitude of youth.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Ballard, is society expecting too much of youth, or, is youth expecting too much of society?

MR. BALLARD: Well, Sir, I'm sure I don't know.

DR. WITMAN: That takes care of that. Do you have an idea that you would like to comment on. Do you have a point of view you would like to express?

QUESTIONER: Yes, I certainly do. I think society is expecting too much of youth today because the generation of one generation ago certainly hasn't adjusted itself to meet the needs of this generation because of this post-atomic era.

DR. WITMAN: Very interesting point. Do you have a comment, Mr. Alinsky?

MR. ALINSKY: I would like to make one point. I think you're right, I think it comes down to the fact that we always expect more of somebody else than we do of ourselves. We can always condemn somebody who gets a million dollars for doing certain things and changing without stopping to think what we would do if we got a million dollars. We're always the perfect ones and everybody else is out of step.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Alinsky, with our improved techniques of education and our improved techniques of communications, aren't we justified in expecting more of our youth? Doesn't the world have to progress?

MR. ALINSKY: No, I don't think so. I disagree with you. I think that my children would have been a lot better off reading good ideas as written by great men through the past ages, than watching some of these television shows which names shall be nameless, let us say, for the present. As far as education goes, our improved techniques in education, -- it is not a question of whether we have better techniques for getting stuff across. The question is, what are we putting across. And I question whether the stuff that we are putting across now is so much better.

QUESTIONER: I think the youth of today are an improvement on our generation, on my generation. I have great faith in them and I think they have had greater opportunities and are an improvement. I know my sons are an improvement on their father.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Alinsky, why are so many programs to prevent juvenile delinquency based so heavily on athletic endeavors only, and doesn't this seem to promote athletics as the prime interest in the average youth's mind today?

MR. ALINSKY: I'm not saying athletic programs are not good, they are good, but one of the reasons why, as far as I am concerned, so much emphasis is put on them is because they are non-controversial, because if you get into the field of housing, you get into a fight between public housing advocates and private housing. You get in the field of racial discrimination in a straight head-on program, you get into a controversial area. You get into the field of health, you get into a fight between the proponents of health insurance and those who are opposed to it. Everybody is for athletics. You're safe.

MR. BALLARD: And I want to say that I agree with you. You can't solve the delinquency problem by building another gymnasium.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Ballard, do you think that juvenile delinquency will continue to increase as it has in the past few years?

MR. BALLARD: I am an optimist. I do not believe it will if we get some federal aid, some more money, and we'll spend more time working at this. I think we will check it.

QUESTIONER: Mr. Ballard, do you think that the age of 18 is old enough to vote?

MR. BALLARD: Yes, I do.

DR. WITMAN: I guess we have used up our time. We want to thank both Mr. Alinsky and Mr. Ballard for their very helpful contribution to our mutual thinking on the topic tonight.

Let us extend our thanks to Monsignor Nicholas Wegner and his associates at Boys Town, and also to Richard Chapin and the staff of Station KFOR in Lincoln.

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